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R. L. M.
A
BRIEF NARRATIVE

IN

RELATION TO THE POSITION

OF

Philadelphia Yearly Meeting of Friends.



PHILADELPHIA:
TO BE HAD AT FRIENDS' BOOK STORE,
304 ARCH STREET.

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1873.

*At a Meeting for Sufferings held in Philadelphia the
20th of the Twelfth month, 1872,*

“The Committee to whom was referred in the Third month last, the subject of the unsettled state of our Religious Society, produced a Document composed chiefly of extracts from the minutes and correspondence of this Meeting and those of the Yearly Meeting, setting forth the earnest concern which has been long felt on account of the introduction and spread of doctrines and practices in the Society which are contrary to those always held and observed by its consistent members, and showing also the efforts of those meetings to guard against their adoption. The reading of the essay produced a renewed sorrowful sense of the declension which has taken place amongst us as a people, and the want of that full unity with our Christian principles on the part of many of the members which once existed and distinguished us as a Religious body, wherever located. After deliberate weighty consideration of the Document, it was fully united with; and believing that its circulation at the present time among our members will be useful in showing the Christian care and concern which has long been manifested for the preservation of our Religious Doctrines and Testimonies in their original purity, and may incite Friends to adhere faithfully to them, as well as be the means of removing erroneous impressions respecting the action of the Yearly Meeting, it was concluded to publish it for the use of our members and others, under the title of ‘A Brief Narrative in Relation to the Position of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting of Friends.’”

“The Clerk is directed to sign it on behalf of the Meeting.

“Extracted from the Minutes.

“JOSEPH SCATTERGOOD, Clerk.”

A BRIEF NARRATIVE.

THE present unsettled condition of our beloved Society, and the numerous changes that have taken place, and are still going on among many of its members, have, at different times, brought this Meeting under much religious exercise. These changes show, as we believe, a departure from a consistent adherence to the doctrines of the gospel, as recorded in the New Testament and promulgated by those dedicated servants, who were made use of in the Lord's hand to gather Friends as a distinct portion of his church. On this account an earnest concern has been felt, that we may be found faithfully endeavoring, under the guidance of Divine Wisdom, to perform whatever may be required of us, in order to strengthen and guard our members, and prevent the flock from being scattered.

We see, with much sorrow and alarm, that several important Christian testimonies, as well as doctrines and practices, which the Society, ever since its rise, has felt bound to maintain before the world, are being relinquished or called in question by a large portion of the members in different

places; giving rise to a well-grounded fear, that, if the principles advocated and the course pursued by such are persisted in, many will be led back into the use of the beggarly elements, and into so close an assimilation to other religious professors, as to be distinguished from them by little more than a name.

This state of things has not come upon the Society all at once. It is the natural outgrowth of seminal principles, speciously presented and associated with much that is true, but tending to lead away from the spirituality of the Christian religion, as professed by Friends, and to substitute something else for submission to the revelations of the Light of Christ in the heart, as a means for perfecting salvation, and preparing for service in the Lord's army.

The promulgation and adoption of Unitarian views by members of the Society of Friends, led to a wide-spread and mournful separation nearly fifty years ago, and made Friends sensitively alive to any attempt to weaken their faith in the divinity and atonement of Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the world. But whilst endeavoring to guard against the errors into which so many had fallen, there were some who overlooked the snare which the enemy was spreading for their feet, by inducing them to undervalue the great fundamental doctrine of the Light within, as the leader into all truth, and the guide to eternal salvation of all those who faithfully heed and obey it. Because some under

our name had denied the divinity of the dear Redeemer, and the atoning efficacy of the sacrifice which He made on Calvary, these, in their unwise zeal to support those precious doctrines, directed their attention so exclusively to the importance of faith in the outward coming and sufferings of our Lord Jesus Christ, as to keep out of view and neglect his inward and spiritual appearance in the soul, where his work must be carried on and perfected, if we ever come fully to partake of the benefits of his manifestation in the flesh, or of the blessings which belong to his gospel.

Many clear-sighted Friends, both in England and in this country, early saw the new danger to which the Society was exposed, and labored earnestly both in public and private, to arrest this insidious error; but their efforts were prevented from having their full effect by the want of clearness in vision in others, who could not be brought to believe that the fears of their concerned brethren were well founded. One departure paved the way for another, and it soon became sorrowfully evident to those experienced servants of Christ, that individuals occupying influential positions had adopted and were promulgating opinions on important points of Christian faith, which were not in accordance with those held by Friends; and that, in order to open the way more effectually for their further reception, the sentiment was published abroad that those divinely gifted men, whose doctrinal works had been accepted and approved by

the Society as containing a true exposition of its Christian belief, were defective in their interpretation of Scripture, and were too much relied on as expounders of the truths of the gospel. They found that the spiritual views of the Christian religion, which had always characterized Friends as a body, were being more or less perverted and obscured by popular writers; that the universality of the love of God as manifested in bestowing on all mankind a measure of saving light, whether they had a knowledge of the Holy Scriptures or not, was called in question; and that the Scriptures and a knowledge of them were exalted beyond the place which they themselves assigned to them; while little was said of the indispensable necessity of attention and childlike obedience to the measure of Divine Grace vouchsafed to all as the primary rule of faith and practice.

This brought those faithful men under close exercise. Many of them had already witnessed, and suffered from, the contentions, the destruction of love and unity, and the obstruction to the usefulness of the Society, and the growth of its members in the Truth, which attended the introduction and progress of Unitarian sentiments within its borders, and finally sent away a large number from its communion. They dreaded a repetition of such deplorable evils, and they felt the duty, laid upon them by their Divine Master, to make such efforts as appeared called for at their hands, to arrest the extension of what they believed, if unchecked,

would undermine the original faith of the Society, and prove a cause of irreconcilable disunity and division.

The Yearly Meeting of Philadelphia fully shared in the exercise which prevailed in different parts of the Society on these accounts, and at various times in the last forty years it has given expression to its concern in the language of Christian exhortation, entreaty, and warning.

As early as the First month, 1835, this Meeting addressed an epistle to the corresponding body in London, calling its attention to some works which had appeared in England, written by members of our Society, containing doctrines not in accordance with the established faith of Friends, which, they say, “has given cause for much concern and exercise to Friends in many parts, who are desirous to keep steadfast in the principles and doctrines most surely believed and established among us.” This labor of love was cordially approved by the Yearly Meeting in 1835, when it was spread before it by the reading of the minutes of its representative body. The epistle was sent into the Women’s Meeting, that they might participate in the concern, and Jonathan Evans and Samuel Bettle were requested to unfold to Women Friends the exercise which its reading had brought upon the Men’s Meeting. The following minute was adopted by the Yearly Meeting at that time :

“The Meeting has been brought under much

exercise on account of the circulation of books in different parts of the Society, which tend to invalidate a belief in the universality and efficacy of the Light of Christ in the heart, as an unerring guide, and the primary rule of faith and practice; and that it is the only medium through which we can truly and livingly attain to the knowledge of God and the mysteries of his heavenly kingdom. It is our fervent concern to guard our members against all such speculative opinions, which would rob them of their faith in the inward and immediate manifestation of the Spirit of Christ, which has ever been a fundamental doctrine of our Religious Society, and is the hope of the saints' glory. For our dear young Friends, in an especial manner, we tenderly desire that they may cherish an acquaintance with the Lord, as He appears by His Spirit in the heart, and is testified of in the Holy Scriptures; that, sheep of his fold, they may know his voice and follow Him, who will lead them to reject the voice of the stranger."

In the reply sent by London Meeting for Sufferings, under date of Twelfth month 8th, 1835, they say :

"We have to deplore the mischievous effects of publications tending to depreciate the writings of our early Friends, and to shake the faith of the inexperienced in the teachings and guidance of the Holy Spirit. Amidst all these causes of discouragement, however, we are cheered and comforted

in believing that the great body of Friends stand firm to the precious testimonies given us to bear, founded and based as they are upon Scripture authority.

“The progress of liberal opinions in this country, having placed us now pretty much on a level with our fellow-countrymen, with respect to eligibility for places of profit and trust under Government, we fear that it may prove a temptation to some to assimilate with the world, and to give up by degrees those testimonies and those distinguishing marks of our profession, which have hitherto been as a hedge about us.”

In an epistle from this Meeting to the London Meeting for Sufferings, dated Fourth month 15th, 1842, the following language is used :

“We would tenderly suggest, in the brotherly freedom which has always subsisted between us, whether an advantage might not arise from a change in your practice respecting the examination of works touching our religious principles, which are designed for publication. In the present day there seems to be a great disposition to write on such subjects ; and, if we may judge from the character of some of the essays produced, it is not always profitable or salutary. When members are at liberty, without the supervision of the body, to write and publish whatever they please upon the doctrines and testimonies of the Society, discordant, if not unsound sentiments are liable to be put

forth, tending to confuse and bewilder the susceptible minds of the youth, as well as other sincere inquirers after the truth; and although the authors may profess to take the responsibility of their productions upon themselves, yet so long as they are not denied by Friends, the Society will be in some measure implicated in the sentiments promulgated by them. Thus the precious principles of Truth, which we profess, may be prejudiced in the eyes of our sober neighbors, and the way be gradually prepared for innovation upon our ancient and acknowledged Christian doctrines.

“It is a time of much critical inquiry and curious speculation in matters of religious belief, and much is afloat which has the attractive air of novelty. We apprehend there is great need for us all to be scrupulously watchful, lest by adopting or sanctioning new modes of defining our doctrines, or by modifying them to suit the prevailing taste in what is called the religious world, we are insensibly drawn to look upon the simple and Scriptural methods used by our worthy predecessors as behind the refinement of the present day, and by degrees lose our relish for the doctrines themselves.

“These are subjects which, in this age of writing and reading, nearly concern the welfare of the Society everywhere, and have caused much exercise to many brethren, as has also the introduction of some works into this country containing sentiments not in accordance with the princi-

ples which our religious Society has held and promulgated from the beginning. We desire to spread these things before you in brotherly love, for your weighty consideration.”

The reply to this was dated Eighth month 5th, 1842, and indicates unity with the concern, as shown by the following extract therefrom :

“It was under this devotedness to Christ, as their Master, that our predecessors in the Truth were enabled so emphatically to live as brethren, and to know much of the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. We believe that in a concern to maintain this unity the Second-day’s Morning Meeting in London had its origin, and that one of the principal objects in its establishment was to provide for the revision of manuscripts on our principles and testimonies. That meeting has been regularly upheld from that day to the present, and we believe that our religious Society has derived great benefit from the revision which has been thus exercised. We unite with you in the desire that the value of the Christian care thus provided may be more and more felt. We believe it to be your desire as well as ours that this precious unity may increasingly prevail among us, and that it has been under a sense of its value and importance that you have been led to express your concern in regard to the revision of manuscripts.”

To counteract the evil referred to in the corres-

pondence just quoted, and which was now spreading its influence over many portions of our beloved Society, it seemed needful afresh to bring to view the doctrines principally endangered, that Friends generally, and the young and inexperienced members especially, might know what were the views held on these subjects by our forefathers in the Truth. In pursuance of this concern, the following minute was made by the Meeting for Sufferings in the First month, 1843:

“ After spending some time in weightily dipping into the present state of religious society, and imparting to each other our sense of the many devices which an unwearied enemy is using to lay waste the ancient doctrines and testimonies delivered to our early Friends, as set forth in Robert Barclay’s Apology and other of their writings, and which continue to be most surely believed by us, it was, upon solid deliberation, concluded to commit the subject to a few Friends, who are desired, if way opens for it, to prepare an address to our members, supporting these doctrines and testimonies, and endeavoring to strengthen their hands in their faithful maintenance, both by precept, and in life and conversation.”

The committee thus set apart prepared an Address, which was fully approved and adopted by the Yearly Meeting in the Fourth month of the same year, under the title of “ The Ancient Testi-

mony Revived," of which more than 10,000 copies were printed and circulated. In this valuable production, the leading doctrines of the gospel as held by Friends are clearly set forth. It closes with an affectionate address to the members, cautioning them against the indiscriminate and frequent reading of works purporting to be of a religious character, but whose tendency is to cloud the vision, and prepare the way for a departure from a full belief and acknowledgment of the truth as it is in Jesus.

In 1844 this Meeting addressed an epistle to the Meeting for Sufferings of London; the following passages from which show the continuance of this anxious concern for the preservation of our members:

"In our religious Society, which has been so highly favored of the Lord, we behold worldly-mindedness in some, unsettlement and division and disunity in others, weakening that love and fellowship which characterize the Church of Christ, and thereby impairing our ability to answer the design in raising us up to be a people to show forth the power of his grace, by which we might be made instrumental in drawing the nations to the standard of truth and righteousness, and to that holiness which belongs to the religion of our Lord Jesus Christ.

"We do not desire unnecessarily to dwell on the blemishes and imperfections of the Society, yet we

believe its present condition in our land and in yours calls for deep, individual searching of heart, to see what is laying waste our strength; and for fervent prayer to the Lord, that He would be pleased in his mercy to extend his all-powerful arm, and remove those things from among us which may otherwise divide and scatter, until many lose their faith in the efficacy of religion, or become merged among other professors."

The continued spread among Friends in this land, of writings, many of which were originally published in England, in which was manifested more or less plainly the tendency to doctrinal error, which had been now for several years a source of anxious solicitude, and the legitimate effects which these writings were producing, in causing discord and division among Friends in this country, induced the Meeting for Sufferings, in an epistle to that of London, dated Third month 20th, 1846, again to refer to the subject, with a degree of plainness, earnestness, and force, which shows how deep and fervent was the concern which animated it.

After alluding to their epistle of 1835, already quoted from, they say :

"Since the above was written, other works have issued from the press in your land, under the name of Friends, which have increased our uneasiness and led us to refer to the subject in subsequent

epistles. These works have now for several years been producing a divided feeling among Friends throughout our religious Society. While some may apprehend little danger from them, there is in others a godly jealousy for the safety of the Society, accompanied with a fear that the propagation of sentiments adverse to some of the doctrines and testimonies always held by Friends, together with a tendency to an alliance with the spirit of the world, will finally supplant our ancient faith; and that the rising generation may grow up in principle and a corresponding practice, which our forefathers disavowed as incompatible with the spiritual nature of the gospel, and thus the gracious design of the Lord Almighty, in bringing us from under those who cry, ‘Lo here, lo there,’ will be greatly frustrated.

“True unity is a precious, but a very delicate bond, and there is perhaps nothing that so quickly and so effectually severs it as the evidence that persons occupying the highest stations in the Church, are putting forth and maintaining doctrinal opinions at variance with the hitherto established testimonies of the Society. Some who have never fully submitted to the yoke of Christ, or who have through unfaithfulness cast it off, may esteem the difference unimportant; while others, whose spiritual eyes are anointed to see, and who have been preserved chaste in their allegiance to Christ, clearly detect the departure from primitive ground, and being confirmed in the scriptural soundness of our ancient doctrines, can no more compromise

them, than could the faithful sufferers among our first Friends.

“ Such different views must render Friends a divided people in feeling and in object, until what is unsound in these discordant opinions can be testified against, and our Society be brought to oneness of purpose, and an harmonious labor to remove from among us everything that impairs the unity and the love of the brethren.

“ We apprehend that an important period has arrived, in which we must decide to cleave to the distinguishing principles of our forefathers, and that it will not contribute to the peace and safety of the Society, any longer to close our eyes upon the divided feelings which exist, and which may break us up into sects and parties like other religious denominations; unless by a united effort, in prostration of soul before the Lord, beseeching Him to endue us with wisdom and courage, we declare against those errors, and revive and stand to our ancient testimonies.

“ When Friends universally spoke the same language, we have reason to believe the greatest love and unity prevailed among them, and wherever a disposition to change was manifest, division and contention ensued. It was so in the primitive churches. ‘ Now, I beseech you, brethren,’ says the Apostle, to the Corinthians, ‘ by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that ye be perfectly joined together in the

same mind and in the same judgment.’¹ To the Romans he says, ‘Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned, and avoid them.’² Whence it is evident, that not speaking the same thing according to the doctrine which they had received from the Apostle, created parties among them, and that different sentiments on Divine truths cannot be entertained and promulgated without causing divisions. Therefore, as a father watching over them, the Apostle pressingly besought them all to speak the same thing, to be perfectly joined together in the same mind and judgment; and we fully believe that, were the members of our religious Society all baptized by the Holy Spirit into one body, drinking together in the same Spirit, we should see eye to eye on the great truths of salvation; there would be no discrepancies in our testimony, or in the modes of expressing it, nor any faltering in its support, but we also would be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment, speaking the same language to all, both within and without our pale. In the clear vision with which our first Friends were endued of the constitution and government of the Church of Christ, they declared that ‘He who was careful for his Church and people in old times hath not been wanting to us in our day; but, as He has again restored the truth to its primitive integrity and simplicity, and as He has delivered

¹ 1 Cor. i. 10.² Rom. xvi. 17.

our understanding from those false doctrines and principles which prevailed in the apostasy, so He has not gathered us to be as sheep without a shepherd, that every one may run his own way, and every one follow his own will, and so to be as a confused mass or chaos without any order; but He, even the Lord, hath also gathered and is gathering us, into the good order, discipline, and government of his own Son, the Lord Jesus Christ; therefore He hath laid care upon some beyond others, who watch for the souls of their brethren as they that must give account.' (See *Barclay on Church Government*.) As it was then, so it is now — there are those who for Zion's sake cannot hold their peace when they see the flock in danger from any cause whatever, but are constrained to sound the alarm that it may be averted.

“Our ancient Friends further declare, ‘All principles and articles of faith which are held doctrinally, are, in respect to those who believe them, matters of conscience.’ ‘Now we being gathered into the belief of certain principles and doctrines, without any constraint or worldly respect, but by the mere force of truth upon our understandings, and its power and influence upon our hearts, those principles and doctrines, and the practices necessarily depending upon them, are as it were the terms that have drawn us together, and the bond by which we become centered into one body. Now if any one or more, so engaged with us, should arise to teach any other doctrine or doctrines, con-

trary to those which were the ground of our being one, who can deny but the body hath power in such a case to declare *this is not according to the truth we profess*; and therefore we pronounce such and such doctrines to be wrong, with which we cannot have unity nor yet any more spiritual fellowship with those who hold them? and so cut themselves off from being members by dissolving the very bond by which they were linked to the body.’ (*Barclay on Church Government.*) We compel none to join us or to remain with us, and if any apprehend they see beyond the Society, and are not willing to maintain its principles, it would be more honorable in them to acknowledge openly that they are no longer in connection with the Society, than to continue under its name, propagating sentiments inconsistent with its tenets; and had those who do profess with us been faithful in testifying against such, and against their erroneous opinions, it would have preserved many from being shaken in their faith.

“Our object in thus bringing this momentous subject before you is not to stir up excitement, or to create unkind feelings in any. It has brought sorrow and deep distress over a large portion of the burden-bearers in this land, who are made to fear that unless the tendency to division and separation can be arrested, the cause of truth, as entrusted to us by the Head of the Church to maintain, may fall from our hands, and our dear young people, seeing the alienation among the more

active and experienced members, may be scattered from the fold of Christ, and other serious inquirers be turned away from the path the Lord calls them to walk in.

“Whatever feelings of love and friendship we may entertain towards each other, the fact cannot be concealed, that different religious sentiments are causing division in the Society; nor can substantial unity and harmony exist in a religious body whose members are not one in faith and in their religious sentiments. We sincerely desire for ourselves and for you, our beloved brethren, that we may be drawn into a close individual examination, how far we have contributed to bring this state of things upon the Society, by giving our support directly or indirectly to opinions adverse to our ancient principles. May that pure and peaceable wisdom which is from above enable the Church to put away from it those opinions and doctrines, and to labor with their authors and abettors to bring them into the unity of the faith, that so we may be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.

“In the fresh feeling of true brotherly regard, and in the belief that the Lord has many exercised, experienced servants in your land, who travail for the real prosperity of Zion, we have endeavored, in plainness and honesty, and in a sense of our weakness and stripped condition, to unburden our minds on this subject. May what we have written be received in the love in which it

has been penned, that in the mutual desire for the restoration of primitive integrity to the truth, and the blessed oneness which pertains to the members of the Church of Christ, we may, as you remark, be concerned not only to clear away the rubbish, but to put on strength in the name of the Lord, to arise and build, not indeed in creaturely activity or with unhallowed zeal, but in all humility, yet with a hopeful mind.”

This epistle was fully approved by the Yearly Meeting, and referred to in its epistle to London Yearly Meeting, as expressing the sentiments of the body.

In consequence of the information thus given by our Yearly Meeting to that of London of its unity with the contents of the epistle just quoted from, the Meeting for Sufferings in London referred the answering of it to the Yearly Meeting, which, in its reply, after expressing its high esteem for our early Friends, and clearly acknowledging the principles and testimonies by which they were bound together, to be the outward bond of our union as a religious society, &c., says :

“ We highly value and desire the continuance of that free, brotherly intercourse, which, for so long a period, has been maintained with you and the other Yearly Meetings of the American continent with which we have been wont to correspond. Carried on in Christian love and condescension, it

tends greatly to our strength, instruction and comfort; but we doubt whether these objects will be promoted by entering in this correspondence into the particular consideration of cases, which, whenever they arise, are the proper subjects of our discipline in our respective meetings.”

This closed the correspondence on this important subject. It was evident that the deep religious exercise in relation to what a large number of Friends in this country honestly believed to be a prolific source of the defection, disunity, and division spreading throughout the Society, was misunderstood or disregarded by Friends in Great Britain, and that they either saw no cause for, or were unwilling to enter into a united labor with their brethren here, in thoroughly and candidly examining the subject which gave rise to that exercise, and in assisting to apply such a remedy as would restore unity and harmony.

Under these circumstances, the Meeting for Sufferings felt that a duty devolved upon it, from which it could not rightly withdraw,—to point out with greater precision the doctrines contained in various passages in the works to which it had repeatedly referred, which it believed to be contrary to the faith of Friends as put forth in the declarations of the Society itself, and also in the writings of Fox, Whitehead, Barclay, Penn, and others, which it had always testified, were fully approved by it.

Accordingly, at a Meeting for Sufferings, held Ninth month 18th, 1846, the following minute was made :

“ This Meeting having at different times for several years been brought under much exercise and concern on account of various works written on doctrinal subjects, by members of our Religious Society, which it is believed contain sentiments not in accordance with our ancient principles and testimonies, and the subject being now revived and solidly considered, it was the judgment of the Meeting, that a committee be appointed to examine carefully these works, and report to this Meeting those parts which they believe to be of that character, and such observations thereon which may appear to them necessary to show their discrepancy with, and to maintain our faith and doctrine on these points.”

The labors of this committee resulted in the preparation of an exposition, in which extracts from those books were contrasted with the doctrinal views published by early Friends, and repeatedly sanctioned by the Society at large. The Yearly Meeting having approved of it by minute, it was published under the title : “ An Appeal for the Ancient Doctrines of the Religious Society of Friends,” by direction of the Yearly Meeting of 1847.

Among a people such as Friends, it could hardly

be otherwise — unless all were prepared for a change in their religious profession — but that what appeared as an attempt to modify the principles and practices in which they had been educated, and which very many of them had adopted from conviction, would give rise to controversy, and to the sad confusion of a house divided against itself. Those who were conscientiously bound to the original faith, which they believed to be assaulted and in danger, must feel it a duty to point out the wrong and defend the right; while others who were ready to accept the new views, or who failed to discern the discrepancy between the two, would be disposed to charge the former with prejudice and narrowness, or with a disposition to contend about trifles, and thus break the harmony of the Society.

The disunity and other difficulties thus introduced led to a separation within the limits of New England Yearly Meeting in 1845. This sorrowful circumstance brought much trouble upon Friends elsewhere, many of whom were closely bound by ties of religious fellowship, as well as of relationship and friendship, with Friends in New England, who were now found standing in opposing ranks. The subject was brought before Philadelphia Yearly Meeting by documents received from both of the bodies there, and referred to the Meeting for Sufferings for examination; which after a patient investigation of the facts and circumstances connected with the division, made a

detailed report in 1849, in which the judgment was expressed, that, for the reasons stated therein, a right of membership ought to be accorded to the members of the smaller body. In regard to both bodies, the belief is expressed, that "if all classes stand open to the softening influences of the love of God, through His mercy and goodness, everything that has divided and alienated from each other may be entirely removed, and a re-establishment on the right foundation witnessed." The report was adopted by the Yearly Meeting, and was sent to each body claiming to be New England Yearly Meeting.

Disturbance of the harmony of the Society from the same cause has not been confined to New England, but has manifested itself in other parts. A separation took place in 1854 from Ohio Yearly Meeting, brought about by the irregular proceedings of a portion of the members, who withdrew from it and set up another meeting. The subject came before our Yearly Meeting in 1855, by the reception of an epistle from each body; and it decided to read that signed by Benjamin Hoyle as clerk, on the ground that it believed the Meeting which issued it to be the regular Ohio Yearly Meeting.

By direction of the Yearly Meeting given Fourth month 16th, 1855, the following paragraph in reference to this subject was added to the epistles addressed to the Yearly Meetings of North Carolina and Indiana:

“Among the important concerns that have claimed the deliberation and action of this Meeting, has been the mournful separation which took place in Ohio Yearly Meeting in the Ninth month last. We are deeply pained with the inroads thus made on the order and peace of our beloved Society, and which have their origin in a departure from the simplicity and purity of the truth, as professed and practised by our worthy predecessors. Being convinced that the Meeting for which Benjamin Hoyle acted as clerk is the original and only legitimate Yearly Meeting of Ohio, we have continued our correspondence with it. And, dear Friends, we would affectionately but earnestly entreat you to review the course pursued by your Meeting in relation to those two bodies, and see whether, in the setting up of that with which you have declared unity, the order and the principles of our church government have not been disregarded, and a door opened for disorganization and confusion to spread throughout the Society. We are fully persuaded that such is the case.

“We fervently crave that it may please our compassionate High Priest, who is touched with a feeling of all our infirmities, to anoint the eyes of the honest-hearted believers everywhere, to see the things that make for true peace, and enable them to pursue them in faith and humility, steadfastly maintaining our doctrines and testimonies; that so our holy profession may not suffer reproach, but being maintained in consistent practice, we may once more be brought to be a united people.”

In consequence of this conclusion, the Yearly Meetings of Indiana, New York, North Carolina, and Baltimore, which had acknowledged unity and opened correspondence with the body which we believed had left the original Yearly Meeting of Ohio, stated in their epistles received in 1856, that they could not continue their correspondence with this Yearly Meeting.

The impression has obtained among some of our members that the suspension of epistolary correspondence with the Yearly Meetings on this continent was the act of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting. That this was not the case with reference to the four meetings mentioned above, is shown by the following extracts from the last epistles received from them.

The epistle from Indiana Yearly Meeting, held Tenth month, 1855, says: "Highly as we value correspondence with your Meeting, we cannot see how we can continue it, if you adhere to that body in Ohio, whom we look upon as having gone out of the fellowship of the body."

That from North Carolina, held Eleventh month, 1855, speaks of the separation in Ohio, and in reference thereto adds the following paragraph: "It is with sorrowful feelings we are brought to the conviction, that an upright and consistent course of conduct required on our part a suspension of epistolary correspondence with your body, until you are brought into unity with us on this important subject."

That from New York, held Sixth month, 1855, uses this language: "We respectfully appeal to you, if it would be consistent for us to continue correspondence with a meeting that should permanently acknowledge its fellowship with the body in Ohio, that has been adjudged by three Yearly Meetings, besides our own, to have forfeited its claim to the character and standing of a legitimate Yearly Meeting of Friends, by its departure from the established order and usage of our Religious Society? It is our impression that it would not."

The epistle from Baltimore Yearly Meeting, held Tenth month, 1855, says: "We are deeply affected in the consideration of the position in which our dear friends of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting have placed themselves in relation to us, and to the other Yearly Meetings of Friends, by their connection with a body in Ohio with which we cannot have unity. We would earnestly and affectionately request them to review their whole course in relation to this subject, and again come into that fellowship and concert of action, without which we cannot see how we can continue our correspondence."

These four Yearly Meetings thus make the resumption of epistolary correspondence with them depend on our Yearly Meeting setting aside its former deliberate judgment, and refusing longer to unite with their brethren in Ohio, who, like themselves, have been, and still are, striving to maintain the faith and discipline of our Religious Society.

In 1856, Philadelphia Yearly Meeting again addressed epistles to all the Yearly Meetings then in existence, except New England and Baltimore. In that sent to London the following passage occurs, which contains a renewed expression of its judgment on the separation in Ohio, and indicates the ground on which its conclusion was founded.

“ We have read the statement of your proceedings in reference to the division in Ohio Yearly Meeting, and regret that whilst you counsel against separation, you should have recognized a body there as a legitimate Yearly Meeting, of which you say: ‘ We would not be understood as implying that the proceedings of that body (though we speak it with tenderness and with sympathy for the peculiar difficulties of their position) have been in all respects such as we could approve, were it our place to pronounce an opinion thereon.’ The separation there was effected by twelve of the representatives bringing forward Jonathan Binns as clerk, when thirty representatives were opposed to it. They were told in the collected Yearly Meeting that the measure was a separation, which several of them admitted at the time; nevertheless they persisted in consummating it. The whole proceeding was subversive of the order and discipline of our Society; and we have continued our correspondence with the Yearly Meeting of Ohio, with which we have long held a brotherly intercourse, of which Benjamin Hoyle has been the

clerk for several years, and acted in that capacity at their last Yearly Meeting.

“The support of the doctrines of the gospel, under the quickening influence of the Holy Spirit, as held by our Society from the beginning, is a high responsibility placed upon it, and whenever any innovations may be attempted, those who are alive to their importance, as they are faithful, should humbly endeavor to guard the Society against them. Without desiring to reiterate what has been often said, we believe the dissemination of sentiments at variance with our doctrines has been the primary cause of the difficulties now affecting the peace of the Society. May the Lord Almighty, in the riches of his mercy, again cause his divine, all-searching light so effectually to visit every heart as to show every one by what spirit he is actuated, humble all at the feet of Jesus, and again bring the whole body into the precious unity of the Spirit! May we all realize the prayer of the Mediator for the believers in Him, ‘that they all may be one, as thou Father art in me, that they also may be one in us,’ and be renewedly qualified to show forth the glory of the gospel of Christ, ‘in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity!’”

The only epistles received in 1857 were from London, Dublin, and Ohio. After the reading of these epistles, the following minute was adopted, Fourth month 21st, 1857: “In consideration of our

present condition, and the disunity that has appeared on some points, particularly respecting our epistolary correspondence, after much time spent thereon, and the general expression of sentiment by Friends, it was concluded to suspend for this year an epistolary correspondence with all the Yearly Meetings; and the subject of the great importance and the desirableness of the restoration of unity and harmony, both amongst the members of this Yearly Meeting and in the Society at large, being brought into view, it was, under solid deliberation, concluded to refer its present condition to the representatives of the Quarterly Meetings in this Meeting, as a committee now appointed, weightily to deliberate thereon; and, if way opens, to propose any measures for this Meeting to adopt, which they may hope will contribute to the increase of unity, to make a report to this Meeting next year — it being clearly understood that they are not to interfere with or unsettle any of the previous decisions which the Meeting has come to.”

In 1858, “The representatives appointed as a committee last year to take our present condition into consideration, reported that, after considerable time spent in solidly deliberating on the subject referred to them, the way did not open to recommend the resumption of our correspondence with other Yearly Meetings at the present time — which was adopted by the Meeting.”

Since 1857 there has been no renewal of corre-

spondence, but the concern for the support of our doctrines and discipline, which has placed us in the position in which we stand with respect to other Yearly Meetings, has continued to be felt, and has found expression in addresses and epistles to our own members, and to Friends generally, as way appeared to open for it, and circumstances to require.

As many years have elapsed since the most of these proceedings took place, and many Friends, both in our own limits and elsewhere, have since grown up and become actively interested in church affairs, it seemed due to these and to the cause of Truth, thus to bring to view these extracts from the records of our Meetings, for the purpose of showing what has been and what continues to be the nature and ground of the concern of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting — a concern which, we have the best reason to believe, was at one period very largely shared by many of the most deeply experienced Friends in all the Yearly Meetings, and that it is still so, as regards many, we entertain no doubt.

The rapid growth and spread of defective religious sentiments, in connection with the prevalence of a worldly spirit, striking as they do at the very root and foundation of our religious belief, are still subjects of great anxiety to us, and we see no cause whatever to relax our vigilance and watchful care to caution our members against them, and to prevent their increase amongst us.

We desire that our hearts may be kept clothed

with heavenly charity, and we wish not to withhold from others the liberty of acting, under appropriate circumstances, according to their convictions. But we feel constrained to call attention, and we do it with sorrowful feelings, to the changes — early predicted — that have been and are still going on in the Society, which we believe to be contrary to its established principles, and destructive of the purpose for which it was raised up by the Head of the Church; and which, if they continue to be approved and adopted, must lead to its entire modification. These changes are shown, among other things, in the disregard of our ancient testimony against the changeable fashions of the world, and to plainness of speech, behavior, and apparel, manifested even in persons travelling abroad as ministers, and holding other conspicuous positions in society; in the character of much of the ministry; which bears evidence that it is the product of the intellect, rather than proceeding from the immediate inspiration of the Shepherd of the sheep, and is calculated to lead persons to suppose that they may be ranked among the true believers in Christ, without wearing his yoke, and undergoing the humiliating baptisms which He appoints for his obedient children; in the introduction into meetings for worship of stated exercises, such as reading the Scriptures; in the appointment of special meetings for prayer; in the sanctioning of mixed marriages; in the manner in which many of the First-day schools and

Bible-classes are conducted; in the exciting scenes attending many meetings, where the young and the inexperienced are urged to give expression to their overwrought feelings; in associating, under the plea of Christian liberality, ministers of other religious professions in the service of meetings held as those of Friends; in the tacit permission granted in some places, for members to participate in the use of what are called the “ordinances,”—water-baptism and the supper,—and yet retain their places in the body; in the increasing disposition manifested by many to undervalue and set aside *Barclay’s Apology* and other standard works, which the Society, for two hundred years, has declared, fairly and fully unfold the doctrines and testimonies which it surely believes, and also the inward spiritual convictions and experiences which they set forth as characterizing the early Friends; and in the strong tendency, widely prevailing, practically to change the ground on which active services of a religious nature are entered upon, directing the attention more to the outward acts than to the submission of the heart to the Divine will, which is the indispensable work of the true Christian, and lies at the root of all right efforts in the cause of Christ.

The manner in which these departures have spread among us is clearly foreshadowed in the following extract from an epistle of this Meeting, dated Third month 18th, 1853, and addressed to the Meeting for Sufferings of London :

“Where the life and virtue of the holy Truth are departed from, and an easy outside profession of religion, more agreeable to the natural mind, is substituted in its place, there is a constant tendency to lower the gospel standard to suit the declining state of the Church, and departures gradually come to be winked at or tolerated, which the godly zeal and upright firmness of our honorable predecessors would have testified against. By yielding to this compromising spirit, weakness and faltering in the faithful support of the discipline, in cases of the obvious violation of our Christian testimonies, are introduced into meetings, to the grief of the rightly concerned members, and the increase of apathy and lukewarmness. We fear the influence of this state of things as regards the Society in this land, and earnestly desire for ourselves and for our dear Friends everywhere, that, as it is a day of peculiar trials and temptations, in which the love of many seems to wax cold, we may be individually engaged in fervent exercise for ourselves, to know Christ Jesus to be our Light and our Leader, and to qualify us by the power of His Spirit to stand as upright pillars in our respective stations in the Church, and to labor availingly for the exaltation and spread of His name and truth on the earth.”

It is with feelings of unfeigned sorrow that we have believed it necessary thus to bring to view, at this time, the rise and progress in the Society of

sentiments and practices which are inconsistent with our long-established principles, and to narrate the efforts which our Yearly Meeting has made at different times for many years past, to preserve Friends from being carried away with them. We doubt not that a query has often arisen, in the minds of many of our younger members, as to the cause of the partially isolated position in which Philadelphia Yearly Meeting has been placed for some years past, as regards other Yearly Meetings. We trust that these will see clearly that it has not been of our own seeking, but has been caused by and grown out of our honest efforts, faithfully to maintain the doctrines and discipline which have been committed to this Society as a sacred trust by the Head of the Church. A just sense of this may enable them to bear, with meekness and patience, the trials to which we are exposed, and the mistaken judgments of our actions and motives which may be formed by those not fully acquainted with the circumstances in which we are placed.

Many of those who have taken a part in these exercises, who were indeed in their day valiants in the Lamb's army and faithful watchmen and watchwomen on the walls of Zion, are now removed from amongst us. But is the cause less precious? Is its faithful maintenance less important? Surely, no! We believe the language will be applicable to those who are seeking to turn back to the elements and rudiments of the world, and to substi-

tute the willings and runnings of the creature for the government of Christ in the Church ; “ If I build again the things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor.”

Although so great a departure from the principles and primitive ground which first distinguished our Religious Society has taken place, we believe that the testimony of truth, as set forth in *Barclay's Apology* and in the writings of George Fox, William Penn, Thomas Story, and others, will not be permitted to be frittered away till they can be no longer distinguished, and utterly fall to the ground. A remnant, we reverently and thankfully believe, will be preserved from one generation to another, in whose eyes this cause shall still be precious, who shall have the anointing for their teacher, and the Lamb for their light—and the cry of these will yet be heard, “ Spare thy people, O Lord, and give not thine heritage to reproach ! ”

These must continue to bear a faithful, clear and unmistakable testimony to the living, practical headship and government of Christ in his Church, who is Head over all things, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning — who is still both able and willing to do for us abundantly above all that we can ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us ; to whom be glory and dominion by the Church in all ages, world without end.

We fervently desire the restoration of Christian unity throughout the Society, in which the members would become helpers one of another in the

Lord, and labor to build each other up on our most holy faith. Much loss is sustained by this unity being broken; but it cannot prevail as it once did, while the members are propagating adverse doctrines, and some are undervaluing and disregarding testimonies which others feel bound to maintain. The Lord alone can effect the necessary change, and we desire to encourage those who long for the healing of the breach, to wait humbly and patiently on Him, suffering whatever He may be pleased to allow to come upon them, until, in mercy, He may arise and command deliverance to his afflicted, travailing seed.

It is the fervent breathing of our souls that the truth, as it is in Jesus Christ, our only Saviour, may truly revive amongst us; that all our members may be brought to the experience of being grafted into Christ, the living vine, baptized by one Spirit into one body, and all made to drink into one Spirit. As there is a continuance of this experience, the language of the ancient prophet will be applicable — “No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper, and every tongue that riseth up in judgment against thee thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is of me, saith the Lord.”

Signed on behalf and by direction of the Meeting.

JOSEPH SCATTERGOOD,
Clerk.